

# DRAMA

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October MCMXXVII

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# DRAMA

VOL. VI

OCTOBER MCMXXVII

NUMBER 1

THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

## THE BEST NEW PLAYS

By Hubert Griffith

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IT is the fashion to say that the present "autumn season" in the London theatres has opened badly, and to go for proof to certain plays, "Potiphar's Wife," "The Climax," etc., that even flattery could not call the best and brightest of their kind. But if seasons are to be judged by their bad plays, all seasons are equally damned. It is no way to do things.

What is important about the theatre of recent months, is not that it has had some bad plays, but that it has had some good ones—one in particular a play of genius, "The Father." It can be said against the play that it is the work of a madman, that Strindberg, in addition to being cracked, had had unusual and unfortunate experiences of matrimony, that any man who could seriously enjoy fashioning three acts of drama into a passionate Hymn of Hate against womankind generally, was not in his right senses at the time of writing. Granted. All of which being quite beside the fact that it is a great play, a play for adult intelligences, and that if the same cast plays it when it is shortly revived (Mr. Loraine, Miss Dorothy Dix, Miss Haidée Wright) it will again be the play in London most worth going to see.

Another play of genuine quality—again, I regret to say, with a lady being the object of the author's wrath—is "The Silver Cord," that has just come on the London boards after a long run in America. "Have children," says the author, "have 'em, love 'em, and then leave 'em be." Do not, if you are a mother, be too anxious to extend your protecting influence to their middle years, and, in particular, remember that *they* are going to marry their future

wives and not you. Half very true, half exaggerated; and worked out with diabolical skill and dramatic effectiveness. The acting of Miss Braithwaite, Miss Clair Eames (American) and the young lady, Miss Marjorie Mars, is not to be missed.

"The Wolves" at the New Theatre is good melodrama, a little on the noisy side, with Mr. Malcolm Keen suddenly astonishing everybody by coming out with a strong line of really romantic villainy; and Mr. Lonsdale's new comedy, "The High Road," is good Mr. Lonsdale—that is to say, a theme of such venerable novelty as an actress marrying into the peerage, embellished by some of the most expert dramatic dialogue that is being written these days, hardly any dullness, and three or four jokes of a quality high enough to endure them to the heart.

"Thark," the new farce at the Aldwych, is, I am told by those who have seen it, amusing. I can believe it. Messrs. Tom Walls, Leslie Henson and Ralph Lynn know what they want, and what the public wants, and all their recent farces have had success and deserved it. Mr. Tom Douglas's new American play, "The Butter and Egg Man," will probably make nothing like so much appeal to the public at large. Nevertheless, do not be put off. It is a play to enjoy. It gives the logical and ordered history of how fifty per cent. of all bad plays come to be put on in London and New York. If Strindberg's "The Father" is calculated to send down the marriage rate among those who see it, "The Butter and Egg Man" is calculated to decrease the number of bad plays. Besides which, it is extremely amusing in itself.



# THE "PLAYERS' SHAKESPEARE"

By Harold Child

ON a corner of my table lie three now shabby little paper-bound books. They cost sixpence each; and I realize that before the war one could get for sixpence four designs for costumes by Norman Wilkinson, or four (and two of them in colour and gold) by Albert Rutherston. One could get also the text of a play by Shakespeare and a "producer's preface" by the then manager of the Savoy Theatre, whose name was Granville-Barker. Elsewhere in the room—some of them on the floor, which is really the most convenient place for reading them—are six magnificent great volumes at four guineas apiece, each with any number of designs by Charles Ricketts, Albert Rutherston, Norman Wilkinson, Thomas Lowinsky, Paul Nash or Ernst Stern, and each containing a letter-for-letter reprint of the first folio text of a play by Shakespeare and a preface by Granville-Barker. It is not only, nor chiefly, because I am physically rather frail and very lazy, that I wish the matter of these beautiful great quartos were to be had also in some size and weight nearer to those of my little old paper friends. I am aware of the great objection to my desire, which is that no smaller format could do so much justice to the illustrations. These are put where they should be, at the end of each volume; and to the producer who is abreast of his age these beautiful plates can hardly fail to prove full of suggestions and ideas, if not of models that he wants to copy exactly. Mr. Albert Rutherston, who edits this feature of the series, has made it a very important feature; and the artists, whose names are mentioned above, have each contributed a practical, as well as a beautiful and original element to the vision

which the "Players' Shakespeare" is meant to make real.

But my reason for wishing the volumes were smaller is that I want everybody, and especially the people of and in the theatre, to study them; and Mr. Bernard Newdigate's sumptuous productions are altogether too "library" for books that ought to be in every pocket, hand and hand-bag. The old "producer's preface" is, of course, a trifle compared with Mr. Harley Granville-Barker's "Players' Shakespeare" preface. And the manager of the Savoy Theatre was a child in knowledge, perception and imagination—and perhaps a wilful child—to the man who is writing these prefaces and gave the British Academy lecture "From Henry V to Hamlet." Still, "It is not growing like a tree, In bulk—."

There should be no mistake about it. His work in these books is of a quality and is put forth at a time which make it a capital event in the history of Shakespeare in England. Of recent years the textual and the critical study of Shakespeare have taken new turns and burst into new life. On the one hand there is what Sir E. K. Chambers has called the disintegration of Shakespeare; and Mr. J. M. Robertson has done us all a deal of exasperating good by tearing the canon to bits, finding collaboration everywhere, and forcing us at least to be careful about what we may whole-heartedly accept as Shakespeare's and what we may not. On the other hand, there is Professor Dover Wilson, who goes over the folio and the quartos with a tooth-comb and a microscope, takes us into the playhouse and the printing-house, lets us look over Shakespeare's shoulder as he writes, and even while with his great construc-

## THE "PLAYERS' SHAKESPEARE"

tive or reconstructive work he stems the tide of disintegration, proves it very rash to suppose that any play in the canon is a single work of art conceived and written, as we know it, at one time. Mr. Granville-Barker is too much of a student and a man of letters (there, indeed, lies his peculiar strength) not to know the value of the scholars' work on Shakespeare. He does not plunge into the absolutism, the pure aestheticism, which led, for instance, Arthur Clutton-Brock to flout historical criticism of Shakespeare's text. But he knows that, however studiously our age may be reading Shakespeare, not one of us (nor our ancestors either, for many a long year) has had more than a ghost of a chance of seeing Shakespeare acted. His attitude to the folio text may be clumsily represented thus: Of course, these plays have been messed about for revivals, tours and so forth; and you cannot read most of them without finding such obvious muddles as the bringing to Brutus of the news of Portia's death, or the affair of the prisoners in "King Henry V." Still, here are the plays in the form in which Shakespeare's old associates chose to have them printed. Let us see what they would be like if they were acted, and acted under the essential theatrical conditions for which they were written. We can easily smooth out the muddles as we go along. And what these "Players' Shakespeare" prefaces practically do is to show us a performance of each play through Mr. Granville-Barker's imagination. The text of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" is "a copy of a copy of a copy"? Very likely; but let us have a look at the play. There are the characters: let us see what he meant them to be, why he wanted them so, how he stamped definition on them or let them grow to it, how they interact upon each other, and how the players must play them if they are to

give the true effect. There are the scenes: let us see why they are what they are, and put in that order, and where breaks are and are not possible. There (perhaps above all) are the words, which had much more work to do than the words of any modern play: let us see what it is they have to do, how they sound, and especially when they may be stressed and when they must be very carefully prevented from showing off too much. Here are the music and the dancing, too, to be considered, and the costumes, the setting and the properties: let us see what they go for, and how we can manage them best, remembering (after due homage paid to that great reactionary pioneer, William Poel) that this is, after all, the twentieth, not the sixteenth or the seventeenth century. Here, finally, is the play as a whole: let us see what shape and colour it has (not what we think it ought to have), and how it will reveal that shape and colour if we give it a fair chance.

There have been studies in plenty, and some of them very respectable studies, of Shakespeare's stage-craft; but none of them were made by a man—an artist—of the theatre. The theatre has tried over and over again: Garrick and Kemble conscientiously, Charles Keen and Henry Irving a little less so, and even, in his measure, Beerbohm Tree. But while some lacked the necessary imagination, all lacked the necessary knowledge. Mr. Granville-Barker has both. Knowing what Shakespeare's job was, he can see how Shakespeare did it, and how the theatre can bring out the result. Sometimes it is a revolutionary business, this vindication of Shakespeare through the theatre. The most notable example, to my own feeling, is Mr. Granville-Barker's account of "King Lear." One had got very comfortably into the old notion that "Lear" was a play with glorious things in it, but chaotic: a play, too,

## "THE PLAYERS' SHAKESPEARE"

which fell in half and was part too great to be acted and part too dull to be worth acting. Mr. Granville-Barker merely admits the chaos and asks what dramatic effect Shakespeare meant it to have. And as for the dullness, he cannot find it, because, with his acute perception of drama in character and scene, he sees how far from dull that last part would be if only it were properly produced and acted. So "King Lear" comes out, through the theatre, as a single artistic whole, and, what is more, as a play that human beings could act if they would go the right way about it. But he is not determined to prove that every play by Shakespeare is a masterpiece. Of "Julius Caesar" he makes the shrewd remark that it was the gateway through which Shakespeare passed from "King Henry V" to the five great tragedies; and he does not think it a perfect achievement. But with the eye of a

theatrical artist he goes straight to the point that the play has, in spite of all that has been said, a hero, and that the hero is Brutus. Get, and keep, Brutus in the front of it, and, unsatisfactory hero though he may be, he will hold the thing together.

If I began to go into detail, I could fill a whole number of this journal with instances of the light that this man of the theatre throws upon this or that speech, this or that scene, this or that small part. But these are only to be studied in the books themselves, and I must end with the obvious reflection that the author of these prefaces ought to be captain of a richly endowed theatre and made to produce three Shakespeare plays a year. There would be some terrible rows made by the more conservative commentators and critics; but what fun we should all have!

## THE SALZBURG FESTIVAL

By Geoffrey Whitworth

THE Salzburg Music and Drama Festival, which took place during the month of August, has been voted the most successful held since the initiation of the festival scheme some four years ago. In the past, visitors to Germany and Austria have often been disappointed at finding the State theatres closed during August and the programmes at the other theatres reduced to a minimum of attractiveness. But the Bayreuth Festival has pointed the way to similar enterprises in other centres, to the great advantage not only of casual visitors but of the inhabitants of the cities themselves. This year, not only at Bayreuth, but at Munich and at Frankfurt, the finest music might have been enjoyed throughout the "dead month." But at Salzburg, the birthplace of Mozart, music was not the sole, or even the chief, attraction. The list of the three "Artistic Managers" of the festival was headed by the name of Max Reinhardt (the

other two were Franz Schalk and Bruno Walter); and this year three dramatic productions on a big scale were staged for the first time at Salzburg and repeated at intervals throughout the festival.

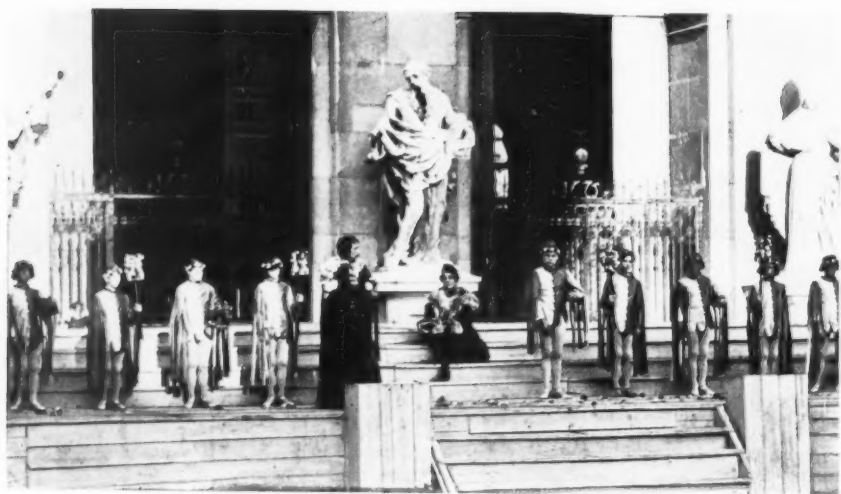
The occasion, therefore, has been an admirable one for viewing the latest tendencies in the work of a man who, though still comparatively young, has behind him a record of achievement in various fields of stage creation which would do credit to one twice his age. At the moment Professor Reinhardt is not only a moving spirit in the Salzburg Festival, he controls theatres in Vienna and Berlin, and plans tours both in America and in England. If restless endeavour is a mark of the genius he is certainly one.

The three Reinhardt productions at the festival were "A Midsummer Night's Dream," Schiller's "Kabale und Liebe," and "Jedermann," the last being given in the open air, in the Domplatz, with the





"GOOD MASTERS HARME ME NOT." CYMBELINE,  
ACT III, SCENE 2. STAGE DESIGN BY ALBERT  
RUTHERSTON, REPRODUCED FROM THE "PLAYERS'  
SHAKESPEARE" BY PERMISSION OF MESSRS. ERNEST  
BENN, LTD. THE ORIGINAL DRAWING IN THE  
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SCENE FROM "JEDERMAN" AS PRODUCED BY PROF. MAX REINHARDT, AT THE SALZBURG FESTIVAL, 1927



GENERAL VIEW OF THE DOMPLATZ WHERE THE PLAY WAS PERFORMED

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## THE SALZBURG FESTIVAL

great Baroque front of Salzburg Cathedral for background. The version played was not our own familiar "Everyman," but a modern transcript by Hugo von Hofmannsthal (author of "The Miracle"), which, while following the main plot of the more homely original, developed a sophisticated feeling quite in keeping with the physical surroundings and with the methods adopted by the producer. The play opened with a burst of music from an unseen organ and orchestra. Afterwards came a prologue, chanted by two pairs of male singers stationed high up on opposite balconies of the square. And then, on the wooden rostrum which had been erected before the great West door, appeared suddenly, out of nothing as it seemed, the small figure of Everyman—Everyman in all his finery, prepared for a day of pleasure and a night of carousal, yet a most lonely and pathetic figure in all that vast space. He was played by Herr Moissi, and the performance was a magnificent one. Never for a moment dominated by its surroundings, the actor's fine voice and perfect articulation carried his words to the farthest corners of the square. And the constant changes of mood, from rollicking humour to the first suspicion of the fate that hung over him, and then through terror to repentance and final immolation—all were expressed with wonderful resource and sympathy.

Reinhardt's own hand showed itself most emphatically in his management of the banquet scene which ends with the terror of Everyman and the dispersal of the guests, as one by one they become aware of the presence in their midst of Death, the skeleton at the feast, represented by what seems to be an actual skull, protruding from a black shroud, a skeleton that yet can walk and talk in sepulchral tones, that resound through the quadrangle like the crack of doom. One by one the guests depart, the very first to go being the lovely lady who had sat at Everyman's right hand. And as the feast thus ends in horror, the sun, which has previously illuminated the steps of the cathedral with fierce rays, sinks behind the building at the back of the audience, and the scene dims down, by the art of nature, to the cold twilight of death.

"A Midsummer Night's Dream," which was given at the Festspielhaus, exhibited—after the comparative simplicity of Everyman—that side of his work with which Reinhardt's name is more usually associated; but, from an English point of view, it cannot be said to have been so successful. "And where is Shakespeare?" was the remark that fell from many lips as scene succeeded scene—each more extravagantly *baroque* than the last. Nevertheless, there was much to interest one in the production. In spite of the elaboration of dressing and staging, the actors provided almost always the emphatic note in the design, silhouetted as they were in bright light against the dark background which allowed the entire play to be presented to a single "set." But the play was certainly "overloaded," and at times it seemed as though the very words were being used merely as an accompaniment to mime, instead of holding their place as the play's first and fundamental medium of expression.

Schiller's "Kabale," given at the Staat Theatre, proved Reinhardt capable of a straightforward piece of stage production in which the actors had the fullest opportunity to carry the lion's share in expressing the play. Opinion at Salzburg gave this the first place in the order of merit, an opinion which would probably be endorsed by any spectator familiar with the German language. Reinhardt, indeed, tends more and more to be at home in the production of eighteenth or early nineteenth-century work. It is easy to see that his spiritual home is that land of Baroque and Rococo which is already beginning to captivate the imagination of artists over here. English culture has for so long been under the sway of Gothic or classic ideals that it comes as something of a surprise to discover the strength and vitality which the Baroque style held, and still holds, in Germany. There a feeling for Baroque is neither a cult nor an affectation, and it may be just as natural to express Shakespeare in those terms as to build a Baroque cathedral to express the mysteries of the Christian religion.

That Professor Reinhardt has at his com-

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mand resources, both artistic and financial, which enable him to experiment so splendidly is a piece of good fortune which we in England can only envy him. As I roamed through the apparently countless corridors, the stupendous foyers of the Festspielhaus (post-war) I could not help feeling some

shame at the difficulties experienced, say, at Stratford-on-Avon in the simply essential task of rebuilding Shakespeare's own theatre. Is it that there is something lacking in the English nature that, in this respect, at any rate, makes us fall so short? Or do we only lack a Leader?

## THE MAGDEBURG EXHIBITION

By Prof. Allardyce Nicoll

GERMANY always shows to perfection in any task of arrangement and classification, but it is also a land of intense æsthetic feeling, eager to experiment and find new beauties; and these two qualities, the one academic if not precisely scientific, and the other definitely artistic, are well displayed in the theatrical exhibition which has been arranged this year at Magdeburg, and which one might wish all members of the Drama League could have seen. Here certainly was matter of interest for everyone. The commercial section, with its arrays of lighting equipment, costumes, wigs, and all the varied appurtenances of the stage, might appeal alike to the manager of the large theatre and to the director of the small playhouse. The mechanical devices of the German theatre can hardly be rivalled, and the models of the more elaborate stages, such as the Staatoper, in Berlin, together with the displays at the commercial booths, indicated vividly the technical perfection attained in so many German cities.

Even greater interest—and this was undoubtedly the pride of the whole exhibition—attached to the historical section, which occupied three large halls and covered in its range the whole progress of theatrical art from the days of Æschylus down to the most modern constructivist experiments by Tairov at the Russian Kamerny Theatre. Thanks to the enthusiastic services of Herr P. A. Merbach, I was able to see this section to its best advantage, and, after a careful study of the exhibits, I was convinced that hardly a finer collection could have been gathered together with an appeal at once popular and scholarly. For the student

were displayed manuscripts, plans and sketches, contributed from many scattered museums and private collections; for the general public—and for the student as well—there was the most magnificent array of models which it has been my good fortune to see. Even if one left alone the original manuscripts of mediæval plays, the Serlian engravings, the Bibiena drawings, there remained in these models the material for a liberal education in theatrical history. The Greek stage, the "standing scene" for a mystery play, the Serlian tragic setting, the English Fortune playhouse, the primitive stages of *Englischen Komödianten*, the baroque theatres in Italian style, the more elaborate modern stages, the varied movements in the theatrical art of to-day—nothing apparently had been forgotten, and this is an exhibition which did not profess to be international, but was designed purely to illustrate the progress of German drama. I heard rumours at Magdeburg that efforts are being made to arrange in 1928 or 1929 an International Theatre Exhibition at Berlin; the riches of this at Magdeburg may give some conception of what we may expect in this still greater undertaking, and one may utter the wish that, if the greater plan comes to fruition, an endeavour will be made to show at least part of the exhibits in London. What Germany can secure on the grand scale, unfortunately we cannot achieve. One of the most interesting features of the Magdeburg exhibition was the class of people who attended. There was, of course, a *Festpark* with every variety of circus amusements, but this did not seem to attract as many visitors as the similar section did at Wembley. Through

## THE MAGDEBURG EXHIBITION

the historical section there streamed daily bands of ordinary, very untheatrical persons who examined the various objects with a care, an attention, and an intelligent interest which, I fear, would be impossible in London, far less in an English provincial town. It is this general interest in the theatre as an art and not merely as a three-hours' amusement which has placed the Continental playhouse so far ahead of our own. The countless designs and models of the modern school are not merely the dreams of individual artists addressing other artists; they have in Germany a great and far extended public who can appraise and appreciate such efforts. The Magde-

burg Theatre Exhibition leaves one with the impression that it is the audience and not the playhouse which is unimaginative and behindhand in England, and that, on the other hand, it is the general audience in so many Continental countries which inspires directors there to fresh and individual efforts. The system of municipal theatres, the results of which are to be seen in the exhibits from Düsseldorf, Kiel, and Magdeburg itself, argues a deliberate belief among the people at large in the theatre as a place of art—argues, too, a conscious willingness to make some small financial sacrifices in order to maintain this artistry.

## THE FÊTE DES VIGNERONS

The Fête des Vignerons at Vevey is held four times in a century. From August 1 to 9, 15,000 spectators witnessed the pageant this year. The music, as in 1905, was by Gustave Doret; Pierre Girard wrote the poem and Ernest Bieler the painter, designed costumes and setting.

The festival centres round the ancient custom of crowning the best vinegrowers. Their guild is still called the "Abbaye de l'Agriculture"—from days when the monasteries fostered vine culture. In 1789, the Fraternity described their foundation as lost "dans la unit des tems," even asserting, perhaps with truth, that the fête was connected with rites in honour of Ceres and Bacchus. Though of national importance and even watched as an index of political feeling, small record of the festival exists before the eighteenth century. That period has left a strong imprint on the pageant even to the costume of the musicians and guards of honour.

Unlike most folk plays surviving in Europe, the Fête des Vignerons has little of a mediæval character. This went at the Reformation. With it, perhaps, some beauty was sacrificed. On the other hand, the pageant is vigorous and unsentimental; continuous music gives unity; the dramatic force, moreover, is not dissipated in irrelevant episodes, as in most pageants, but strengthened by two main ideas: love of country—of the very soil of the Canton—and the triumph of man's work during the

revolving year. Juste Olivier said: "elle est notre chef-d'œuvre national et l'image du pays de Vand, des travaux de ses enfants, de leurs joies."

In mechanism, the spectacle was perfect. Vast crowds moved with precision. The central interest was kept paramount while subordinate groups actively helped the whole picture. With the mountains behind them, the 2,000 performers came through the great gates on to the market place. The pageant started. "Winter," with woodcutters and a village wedding. "Spring" in gay colours; little shepherds dancing, and a fine piece of rhythmic movement in the dance of haymakers, men and girls swinging scythes and rakes—"Summer"—the glories of Ceres, contrasting with the goatherd's plaintive ditty and the haunting, immemorial melody of the Ranz des Vaches. "Autumn"—triumph of Bacchus and a great dance, as though figures on a Greek vase had come to life. These are but a few of the pictures impressed on the memory.

Perhaps Switzerland is the only country which could produce such a work—a glorification of the everyday life of her people, rather than a dressed-up resuscitation of the past. The Fête des Vignerons comes from the very heart of that contented, well-ordered, little Republic, where modern progress moves side by side with old tradition, in the unchanging peace of pastoral life.

AMICE LEE



## BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE NOTES



### THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

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**T**HIS number of DRAMA contains several articles dealing with the dramatic activity which is now a feature, both in England and on the Continent, of the holiday season. On a large scale at places like Sauburg, Munich and Stratford-on-Avon the Festival Spirit is active in the professional theatre. As regards the amateur theatre, the month of August is crowded with various pageant plays and drama schools, all witnessing to the revival of popular interest in dramatic art. The Festival Spirit is difficult to invoke in a metropolitan atmosphere; it is most happily apparent in small centres of population, where for the time being the interest of the whole community becomes centred in activities which not only express local feeling, but attract for that very reason visitors in

search of some unique experience. A dramatic festival can provide a delightful object for the tourist, and there is a great opportunity for holiday resorts both here and on the Continent to develop festival drama of the highest class. Where such festivals have been tried, even on the most ambitious scale, the response from holiday-makers has seldom been found inadequate.

Drama League activities for the autumn include the Annual Conference of the League, which is to be held this year in Manchester from October 28 to 30. A full syllabus of the Conference is being circulated among all members of the League and copies may be obtained on application from 8 Adelphi Terrace. We also call particular attention to the announcement which appears elsewhere in this issue of the course of lectures which will be held in the League's Library on six consecutive Tuesday evenings, commencing on Tuesday, October 11. These lectures are not intended to be of an academic interest, but have been organized with the definite aim of imparting information of a practical value to those—an ever increasing number—who are wishful to take a hand in the actual production of plays. As many of our members know, the accommodation offered by the library is severely limited, so that early application for tickets should be made if disappointment is to be avoided.

The deaths of two artists of the theatre have to be regretfully recorded. The one, Isadora Duncan, a dancer of world-wide fame; the other, Arthur Bouchier, an actor-manager who was known and admired throughout the British Empire. Many to whom Bouchier's name was a household word did not realize the important part he played in introducing amateur drama in the Universities. The foundation of the O.U.D.S. is to his credit, as well as the strenuous effort by which, while still an undergraduate, he was successful in allaying official opposition.

# RECENT BOOKS

Reviewed by Norman Marshall

- The Gentle Art of Theatre-Going.* By John Drinkwater. Holden. 6s.  
*Playgoing.* By James Agate. Jarrolds. 3s. 6d.  
*Play Production for Amateurs.* By Rodney Bennett. Curwen. 2s. 6d.  
*The Amateur Theatrical Handbook.* By Harold Markham. Pitman. 3s. 6d.  
*Mariners.* By Clemence Dane. Heinemann. 6s.  
*Twenty Below.* By Robert Nichols and Jim Tully. Holden. 5s.  
*The Piper Laughs.* By Herman Ould. Benn. 3s. 6d.  
*Practically True.* By Ernest Thesiger. Heinemann. 10s. 6d.  
*The Peep Show.* By Walter Wilkinson. Bles. 10s. 6d.

ONE of the most disturbing facts about the present condition of the theatre in England is that dramatic criticism is tending to become more and more literary. With one or two notable exceptions, the critics devote seven-eighths of their space to the play and the remaining eighth to a few perfunctory words about the acting. The producer and the designer are lucky if they are given one line between the two of them. Acting, producing, and designing are arts in themselves, just as much as the writing of plays, and no art can flourish for long without intelligent criticism. The remedy is more criticism by men with practical experience in the theatre. It is for this reason that Mr. Drinkwater's new book is so valuable, for, besides being a playwright and a critic, Mr. Drinkwater has worked in the theatre as actor, producer, manager, and even on occasion as designer. But I am sorry about the title of his book. "The Gentle Art of Theatre-Going" leads one to expect a pleasantly uncontroversial essay for the half hour before bedtime. It is not at all that sort of book. It is one of the three most important books on the English theatre which have appeared since the war. Chiefly an examination of the principles which should govern the criticism of acting and producing, if it is read half as widely as it deserves to be, it should have an enormous influence on the public's—and consequently the critic's—attitude towards the theatre. I do not remember ever having received for review a book on the theatre which I was more anxious to recommend.

Mr. Agate's book also deals chiefly with acting. It is a pleasant enough essay on the heroic quality of great acting, but is written rather languidly, and reminds one of an evening spent listening to an eminent writer who has been inveigled into addressing an obscure literary society. I admire Mr. Agate too much as a critic to pretend to anything but a feeling of disappointment over this book.

Next on the list are the inevitable handbooks on play-production for amateurs. After having had to read seventeen books of this sort in the last ten months, I hardly expected to be surprised by anything I was likely to find in these two most recent ones. But Mr. Bennett certainly did succeed in sur-

prising me with the statement that so far as he knows there are only two books on the subject—and one of them deals with light opera. Perhaps it was this happy delusion of being among the pioneers which enabled Mr. Bennett to write a pleasantly fresh and original book on a singularly hackneyed subject. Mr. Markham's book is much more typical. In just over a hundred pages he deals with every conceivable side of his subject. As he considers a single page sufficient for the whole question of lighting, and can polish off costume in six pages, and elocution in eight, he has no difficulty in finding room for chapters on the entertainments tax, and on business and advertising. I can see little justification for books of this kind. It is an alarming thought if there really are people rash enough to embark upon the complex business of staging plays with only a single handbook for guidance. Production, scenery, lighting, voice-production, make-up, costume, business-management—all these need books to themselves written by specialists. Spending only a little over a pound, it is possible to have an initial collection of brief and extremely satisfactory books dealing with each one of these subjects. Under the circumstances, it is rank bad economy or preposterous laziness to be content with everything potted into a single three-and-sixpenny handbook.

The outstanding play among this month's batch is Miss Clemence Dane's "Mariners," easily her best play since "A Bill of Divorcement." It is, for so experienced a dramatist, curiously rough and awkward in places, but there is a depth of feeling and an emotional intensity which makes it almost unique among contemporary play-writing, and encourages one in the belief that its author is slowly feeling her way towards pure tragedy. "Twenty Below" is an out-and-out melodrama of American tramp life. Produced and acted really efficiently, it would be luridly effective on the stage, but the characters are little more than conventional stage types, and the violence of the dialogue seems less like the real thing than the result of a purely literary delight in crude emotion. "The Piper Laughs" is a disappointment compared with Mr. Ould's other work. Technically it is interesting, but it is a curious fact that the playwrights who are experimenting with new forms of technique seem quite uninterested in finding original or even suitable themes for their experiments. The theme of "The Piper Laughs" has been used so often for safe commercial plays that it is difficult to see why Mr. Ould should think it worth while to treat it with such expressionable deference.

Lastly, there are a couple of books I have found ideal for a holiday. Mr. Ernest Thesiger's reminiscences make as entertaining a book as I have met for some time—a most attractive mixture of wit, cattiness, generosity, and almost ingenuous delight in the things he himself has said and done. "The Peep Show" is an extremely pleasant story of how the author tramped the roads to Gloucester, Devon and Somerset as a travelling showman with a puppet theatre.

# SOMERSET MAUGHAM

By Joan Littlefield

MR. SOMERSET MAUGHAM is one of the many writers of the present day who served their apprenticeship to literature while in the medical profession, and probably his almost uncanny insight into human nature and the motives, both noble and otherwise, which underlie it is due in some measure to his early training as a doctor. The practice of medicine may be responsible, too, for the note of cynicism that is sounded more or less loudly in all his work.

Mr. Maugham has written some fine novels—notably "The Moon and Sixpence," which is founded on the life of Gauguin, the painter, and which were recently dramatized by Miss Edith Ellis and produced at the New Theatre with Mr. Henry Ainley in the leading part; some excellent short stories and a great many plays, of which the two latest, "The Letter" and "The Constant Wife," have recently been running in London. He is a dramatist of considerable ability and his work for the theatre covers a wide range of subjects. It includes melodramas, problem plays, comedies of manners and such witty and elegant trifles as "Caroline," in which Miss Irene Vanbrugh delighted us all last summer.

But in all his plays, whatever their theme and treatment, Mr. Maugham's craftsmanship is unerring. He has a strongly developed sense of the theatre that enables him to get far more out of a situation than most of his fellows, and he can build up a play with an economy of means that should be a lesson to all aspiring young dramatists.

A study of his work should be of great value to students who are interested in the technique of play-making. His plays are theatrical in the best sense of the word. That is, they are written for the theatre rather than for the study, and every word of them is chosen for its effectiveness when spoken on a stage. Mr. Maugham's plays are eminently actable and after the so-

called "Literary" drama, they must be a joy to the players who take part in them.

Although Mr. Maugham has tried his hand at many types of drama, he seems to have specialized in two kinds: in the rather cynical but witty comedy of modern manners that has almost a Restoration flavour about it, and in the social melodrama that, besides pointing a moral, also asks a question.

In the former type Mr. Maugham has had so many imitators that he might almost be called the father of the ultra-modern comedy that specializes in sex and cynicism. He is not, however, a sensationalist, and "Our Betters" and "The Circle," though about unpleasant people, are fundamentally moral and have wit enough to justify their existence as works of art.

Mr. Maugham's social melodramas are almost problem plays. He can tell an exciting story with great skill and however swift the action of the piece his characters never become puppets. There is always something about them that makes us interested in their problems.

An early example of his ability in writing this type of play was that drama of the backwoods of Canada, "The Land of Promise"; more recently there was the spectacular "East of Suez," which dealt with the problem of the Eurasian who marries a European; and now we have "The Letter" at the Playhouse, which is technically the best of the three. For sheer intensity of situation, untrammelled by a single unnecessary word, this play is a splendid piece of dramatic craftsmanship.

Mr. Maugham, however, is something more than an able craftsman. He can create character and, unlike some men of the theatre, he has something to say. The fact that he knows how to say it and has wit enough to sweeten the bitterest pill, helps to make him one of the most popular and provocative of modern dramatists.

## SOME OLD PLAYBILLS

THE recent acquisition of Playbills and Prints generously presented to the Victoria and Albert Museum by Mrs. Gabrielle Enthoven is a matter of extreme interest to lovers of the Drama, and Mr. James Laver's article on the subject in *DRAMA* for April is useful. Possibly a few words of mine may be acceptable, as such matters have engaged my attention on several occasions. To *Opera* of July, 1924, I contributed an article which I called "A hundred thousand playbills," that being the number of the collection as then estimated, and in the *Sackbut* for August, 1925, appeared another article by me, "Programmes and Playbills." Both articles referred to the Enthoven collection.

The Victoria and Albert Museum is doubtless an excellent home for this wonderful collection. Of course no museum could exhibit a tenth part of the playbills at one and the same time, and a display of a few hundred at a time would appear to be a desirable system. A catalogue is of course of great utility, but the peculiar value of such an exhibition consists in our being able to see the originals. There is a fascination in the quaintness of the announcements and the style and printing of the bills. I must say that I have found the originals arouse my interest in a way which no catalogue ever could.

Although the Enthoven collection is probably the largest in existence, it should not be forgotten that the British Museum holds a very fine one. They are chronologically arranged, and bound in volumes so that they are extremely easy to consult. I have taken a few at random, some of the extracts being complete, and some merely exhibiting interesting, quaint, and amusing features. They are all of Covent Garden Theatre and are typical of the bills of many theatres, both London and Provincial, extending over a long period.

September 26, 1753.—The Funeral (revis'd) followed by A Tragi-Comi-Pastoral Farce The What D'ye Call it.

April 11, 1755.—Romeo and Juliet. Juliet Mrs. Bellamy. The funeral procession of Juliet which will be accompanied by a solemn dirge Vocal parts by [7 names given] and others Dancing by Mr. Granier, Mrs. Granier, and others

To which will be added a Musical Entertainment call'd The Press-Gang; or Love in Low Life. Epilogue to be spoken by Mr. Cibber.

October 10, 1755.—Love for Love Mrs. Frail, Mrs. Woffington.

April 19, 1756.—The Country Lasses or The Custom of the Manor. Several entertainments of singing who never appeared in public. Purcell's celebrated duett of Cæsar and Urania. The School of Anacreon set to Music by Mr. Arne. The favourite trio called Pleasure's Golden Reign, set to Music by Mr. Worgan. † There will be no building on the stage.

November 18, 1767.—Dibdin's name appears as a singer.

March 7, 1768.—King Lear Altered from Shakspeare and Tate. End of the Play a New Comic Dance called the Highland Reel.

June 4, 1768.—Cymbeline. A new occasional Prologue will be spoken by Mr. Powell. End of Act III the Highland Reel.

February 1, 1769.—A new comic opera called Tom Jones. End of the Opera The Irish Lilt.

April 23, 1776.—The Duenna or the Double Elopement.

September 27, 1776.—The Beggar's Opera. Polly by Miss Catley. In Act III a Hornpipe by Miss Besford. To conclude with a country dance by the characters.

October 7, 1776.—Comus. Euphrosyne by Miss Catley.

October 11, 1776.—"A Farce call'd Catherine and Petruccio."

October 15, 1776.—"A Tragedy call'd Douglas" followed by a Comic Dance call'd Mirth and Jollity. To which will be added The Golden Pippin. Juno by Miss Catley.

October 23, 1776.—The celebrated Masque of Comus in which will be sung a favourite Scotch Air of Dr. Arne's and a Hunting Song.

November 18, 1776.—Ethelinda or the Royal Convert. In Act V the original Music for the Sacrifice composed by Purcel to which will be added a new musical piece in 2 acts call'd The Seraglio the music chiefly composed by Mr. Dibdin.

December 6, 1776.—Caractacus written on the model of the ancient Green Tragedy. Overture and all the music compos'd by Dr. Arne.

May 7, 1773.—Twelfth Night. End of Act III The Pigeon a favourite song. After the play the favourite song of "Four and twenty fiddlers all on a row."

To which will be added a sentimental Musical Farical Bagatelle called Tristram Shandy.

Between the first and second Acts "A description of the Tombs in Westminster Abbey" by Mr. Edwin.

F. A. HADLAND

# A YEAR'S DRAMA IN A PROVINCIAL TOWN

By R. Glave Saunders

HAVING spent the last year in Exeter, a cathedral city of 60,000 inhabitants, with a University College (more typically perhaps an English provincial town than one of larger size), it occurred to me that a short account of the dramatic fare offered should be of interest. The Theatre Royal—owned by about 500 local shareholders and very efficiently managed by a gentleman who has grown up with the theatre—was open for forty-three weeks. During this season twenty-eight plays were presented during a period of twenty-one weeks, the remaining weeks being occupied by various musical productions. The whole of December and January is given over to the rehearsals and performances of an entirely locally produced pantomime.

Taken as a whole, the plays were well produced and well acted. The outstanding success of the season was undoubtedly Chas. Macdona's company in "Saint Joan," with Dorothy Holmes-Gore in the title rôle. I had hardly thought it possible to tour No. 2 towns with such an excellent company; every character in the large cast was more than adequately portrayed, while the scenery was, as far as I could remember, an exact replica of the London production. Although this was a second visit, better business was done than on the previous occasion.

Next to this I would place Philip Ridgeway's company in "Tess of the D'Urbervilles," which gave a moving performance of this interesting play; the simple but effective scene-sets helping to create the right atmosphere. Also, of course, must be placed in the front rank Fred Terry and Julia Neilson in Wm. Devereux's romantic play, "The Wooing of Katherine Parr," in which Mr. Terry poured all the art of his genius into the character of the amorous monarch, and so enabled us to overlook a slight want of dramatic grip which one looks for in an historical play. In "Sun Up" Lucille la Verne showed us the immense dramatic value of restraint; incidentally the provincial audience was rather bothered by

the dialect. Alex. Marsh and Germaine de Vaux's company in "The Man with a Load of Mischief" gave those of us who had only seen it once in London a chance of enjoying again and appreciating still more the beautiful writing of this play; but I am still puzzled by its brilliant author lavishing so much talent over such a trivial plot and emphasizing a main incident of so unsavoury character. At least that was how it struck a provincial audience.

Another outstanding success was Iris Hoey in "Clothes and the Woman," in which she gave a very clever character study of a double-sided personality, although I thought her genius and good looks would have been amply sufficient to emphasize the butterfly side of the character without an obvious over-dressing of the part. Frank Forbes-Robertson and his company quite caught the last-century atmosphere in a new play of much charm by Constance Stuart from Helen Mather's novel, "Coming Thro' the Rye," in which the best performance was by Mrs. Forbes-Robertson as Nell Adair.

Westlan Productions Company in "The Ghost Train" was excellent, and by restoring a prologue, which was left out of the London production, the play was lengthened and also strengthened by allowing the author to elaborate his characters more fully.

The best farce of the year was undoubtedly "The Cuckoo in the Nest," which was presented by J. Bannister Howard's company, and I am sure they got as many laughs out of this merry piece as the London company. "Rookery Nook" struck me as a little more laboured in its humour and improbable in its plot, but both did very good business, showing that provincial audiences fully appreciate a good laugh. Two other companies left an abiding impression: "The Eleventh Commandment," with its clever characterization and logical ending, and "The Last of Mrs. Cheyney," in which Garry Marsh was excellent as Charles; but I found it rather



## A YEAR'S DRAMA IN A PROVINCIAL TOWN

difficult to imagine a diffident little lady like Miss Martin-Harvey as a crook.

The success of another good play, H. F. Maltby's "The Right Age to Marry," was largely due to Terence Byron's lifelike interpretation of Lomas Ramsden, but he should guard against a tendency to burlesque the character. Other plays presented were "Ask Beccles," "Cats' Cradle," "Dracula," "The Rescue Party," and five Shakespearean plays, the latter being poorly supported. The only bad production (and this was only a stop-gap half-week's engagement) was a version of "Sleeping Partners," in which the principal actor, in attempting to imitate Seymour Hicks (without having his genius) turning this clever French comedy into a meaningless English farce. In this case the proverbial dog (a provincial audience) almost growled its dissatisfaction.

One point in the management of our theatre is, I believe, decidedly novel, and may, perhaps, be worth a trial by other managements. On the Monday nights of twenty-two out of the thirty-seven weeks of the season, shareholders were allowed the privilege of booking up to four seats in any part of the house at half-price. (Needless to say, this is neither possible nor necessary in the case of a star attraction.) This seems to me a sound business proposition. It results in a more or less crowded house on the slackest night of the week, giving a good send-off for the play and also serving as an excellent broadcasting advertisement for the rest of the week if the production is a good one. Again, there are many shareholders (some holding only a single share) who cannot afford to be regular weekly patrons, but will come and bring their families on shareholders' nights, while a proportion of those who can afford a weekly visit, not being enthusiasts and only attending spasmodically, will almost always turn up with the inducement of half-price seats, such being human nature.

So much for professional talent: what had the amateurs to place against this? The latter have still rather a long way to go before there is any question of their becoming serious competitors to the professional stage. The two dramatic societies,

the Drama League and the University College Dramatic Society, are seriously handicapped in that the only available hall has a small stage, no scenic appointments and poor lighting; in fact, it was only built for concerts and lectures. And up to last year neither society had any scenery or wardrobe. But during this past season the College made a start with their own scenery, and the League acquired a wardrobe and a rehearsal room, while during the coming season the two societies, having the offer of a capable amateur scenic artist, are going to co-operate in the gradual building-up of a complete scenic outfit.

Coming to details: what have the amateurs achieved during the year? The two outstanding productions were, perhaps, Pirandello's "Henry IV," the meaning of which evaded most of the audience, and Barrie's "Dear Brutus," which had never been played in the city before, and is one of the most difficult plays for amateurs to tackle. With these productions should be mentioned a well-selected triple bill, the strongest item of which was a gripping version of Capt. Harwood's grim playlet "The Mask." Somewhat less satisfactory performances were given of "The Devil's Disciple"; "The Likes of Her" (the middle act being by far the best, whereas the last act should be the dominant one); "Everyman" (where the prompter was too much in evidence); "Much Ado About Nothing" and "Salma" (beautifully dressed and well acted by some of the cast). The Boys' High School did "The Admirable Crichton," which was rather an unfortunate selection (made by the boys themselves, I believe, whose first choice was "Charley's Aunt"!), for the ladies' parts were taken by boys, which means burlesquing them.

Reviewing the amateur situation as a whole, I am inclined to think that fewer productions and longer rehearsals would result in a decided all-round raising of the standard. And as a result an increased public support would render possible two or three performances of each play instead of the usual one. For nowadays the play-going public do largely judge amateurs by professional standards, and this not only as regards the acting, but the general production as well.

## DRAMA IN WALES

**D**URING the last fifty or sixty years, people speaking of the drama in Wales were apt to smile, indicating thus that such a thing was non-existent. To a certain extent, I suppose this was true, for every new Welsh play written then was merely another variation of an old theme. The characters were stock figures—the hypocritical, grabbing deacon of the local chapel, the errant but repentant son, now made wealthy by long sojourn in America—(this never failed to enrich people!)—the worthy peasant parents, and the village policemen, all these were used time after time, with slight variation. People knew the end of a play before the first act was over—they knew that, dark as seemed the future of the now impoverished old folk, the long-lost son would soon return with his welcome riches. It was merely a question of time—it might be in the second, certainly in the third, act.

But of very late years a progressive urge has been felt for new plays which try to get away from the old bonds.

The lack of suitable traditional drama has, however, hampered the would-be playwright. No good models exist in Wales upon which he can base his play. Thus he has had to turn to other than native sources. Blood transfusion was necessary, so to speak, to strengthen the young weakling. Two years ago, we saw the Ibsen play, "A Doll's House," done into Welsh, and produced with a commendable measure of success by the Bangor University Welsh Players. This year a contemporary play, Sutton Vane's "Outward Bound," was translated and produced by them. This was a step forward, and, as we shall see, paved the way for further work in that direction.

Then for some time we were hearing of a wonderful production that was to be staged during the week of the National Eisteddfod at Holyhead. This was to be an immense production designed to give a definite impetus to the drama in Wales. The play for performance was to be Ibsen's "Pretenders" ("Yr Ymhwyr"), which lent itself admirably to the Welsh taste for anything historical. The whole production was staged at the expense of Lord Howard

de Walden, President of the British Drama League. His enthusiasm and help were the chief causes of the success of the stupendous experiment. So that nothing should be lost in the producing, Lord Howard de Walden placed the entire play in the hands of M. Theodore Komisarjevsky, of the National Theatre, Moscow, the famous producer of Ibsen plays. The production, on the evening of August 1, was looked forward to with interest by all who had the good of Welsh drama at heart.

As one entered the huge pavilion, one saw a vast sea of some 8,000 faces, seething with interest. As there was no drop-curtain, the stage, with its mediæval semi-barbaric setting, could be seen. The simplicity and boldness of the design contributed materially to the atmosphere.

The effect of listening to the play was one such as must have been evident at the performance of a Greek tragedy, and one may be excused for expecting the actors to wear buskins and masks! But after a time the Greek effect was destroyed, for the play moved along quickly, and battles and skirmishes were as lively as the actors could make them. In any case the Greeks knew not of amplifiers or amber lights, or flame effects burning up whole cities!

The pageantry, which, owing to the size of the cast and the lack of a drop-curtain, was a necessary part of the play, did not destroy the effect of the plot. We were able to follow the introspection and doubts of Earl Skule, and to admire the steadiness and firmness of King Hakon. Bishop Nicholas engendered hatred in all of us by his craft and knavery. His dying speech, with its final deceit of Skule, deservedly roused the audience to a high pitch of enthusiasm. The effects of the storm as he lay dying, and the solemn chanting of the monks, were not lost upon the temperamental Welsh audience. It would, of course, be impossible to single out any of the actors. But they were the pick of the North Wales Dramatic Societies, and playing to such a vast and appreciative audience invigorated them all and made them give their best.

## DRAMA IN WALES

As a work of art, the production was in every way exceptional, and Lord Howard de Walden may well feel proud that his "We can do it" of a few months back was justified. The experiment has been a success in itself. Will it have its effect? It is too early yet to say. But in view of the fact that some promising work was

begun before "The Pretenders" was played in Holyhead, we may hope that after its great example we shall find more good plays forthcoming. If it has little past, the Welsh drama's future lies in the hands of the present generation, who now know its possibilities.

J. F. W.

## NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

### THE VILLAGE DRAMA SOCIETY SUMMER SCHOOL

The Summer School, held at New Earswick, York, during August was most successful; students, for the most part from the villages, coming from all parts of the country.

With a memory of the pale exhausted students that left the Summer School last year, the V. D. S. had determined to be merciful, and a moderate programme was arranged, according to which every student might have two hours' free time, in which to see York or to play tennis. But in a few days the school had taken the bit between its teeth and the free time had completely vanished! Everyone was taking as many parts in as many plays as could be learnt, the record being touched by one who played seven! Each corner of every room, and every little lawn outside the Hall had its group of rehearsers, and the impassioned cries that reached her from every side were a source of endless amusement to the caretaker of the Hall. All this "confused noise without" resolved itself into some remarkable achievements. Miss Lally produced "Prunella" as the principal students' play, and scenes from "Henry VIII" as the secondary one. Both were excellent performances considering the extremely short time for rehearsal. The groups were this year composed largely of people from neighbouring villages, supplemented by the students, and they included three children's plays. Their plays were "The House with the Twisty Windows" (produced by the author), "Crabbed Age or Youth," A Scene from Hippolytus, "The Swineherd," "Shivering Shocks" and "The Frog and the Mouse."

An extremely interesting feature of the school was the local village drama shown by five Yorkshire villages. These gave three Shakespeare scenes, "Campbell of Kilmohr," "The Miss Dodsens that Were," and three original plays. The standard of performance in Yorkshire is undoubtedly of a high quality and the students from the South were greatly impressed.

Miss Lally's lectures were, as usual, both inspiring and practical, and the students left the school anxious to start work as soon as possible. Mrs.

Gibson's diction classes were greatly valued, and her students gave a Recital at the end.

The property classes under Miss Catharine Crompton were a great attraction, but the claims of rehearsal prevented the achievement of many complete properties. Professor Morgan, Principal of Hull University, gave a lecture on "Poetry and the Drama"; Miss Marjorie Gullan spoke, with illustration, on verse-speaking, and the President of the Society, Mr. Gordon Bottomley, spent the last few days with the school.

The New Earswick Dramatic Society were the most hospitable of hosts, doing everything imaginable to make the school welcome to New Earswick. They gave it a reception on the first evening which included a delightful performance of "The Tents of the Arabs"; and their stage-setting, lighting, etc., were an excellent example of what may be done with a small stage.

### SUMMER SCHOOL OF DRAMA CITIZEN HOUSE, BATH

So many productions of interest took place during the Season (July 31 to August 13) of the Summer School at Bath that to dwell upon each in detail would be impossible. It can only be said that the school from every point of view was from start to finish an unqualified success.

Plays were given both in the Little Theatre, and the Roof Garden Theatre of Citizen House, and there were some out-of-door performances in Victoria Park, Bath.

Lectures and classes relating to the Drama took place during the mornings and early afternoons, and later in the day the time was given to rehearsals and the performing of plays.

The various groups taking part were: The Citizen House Players, Wincanton, Cotswold, and Wyke-Regis Players. The Folk House Players, Bristol, and the Fontnal-Magna Village Players and the Woodridge Players.

Some of the outstanding events were: "Alicia in the Twilight," a musical play by Lady Margaret Sackville; "The Immortal Rose," a Greek play

## NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

by Miss Lorna Celland; Lord Dunsany's "The Golden Dawn," "Our Lady of Poverty" (Little Plays of St. Francis); Sir James Barrie's "Rosalind," "The Dean Degraded," by Stanley Houghton; Galsworthy's "The Little Man," and "The Tempest," etc., etc.

Producers, to whom the great success of the above was due, were, amongst others, Miss C. M. de Rhey, Mrs. Pickin, Mrs. Hayham-Meek, Mr. Pollock (of the Lennox Players) and Mr. John Kilner, of the Lena Ashwell Players.

Lectures were given during the school by Professor Morgan, of Hull, Mr. Fred Weatherly, Mr. F. J. Dawson (editor of the *Amateur Stage*), Mr. and Mrs. G. K. Chesterton, Professor Horrox, of Exeter, and Mr. Hannam Clarke, Lady Margaret Sackville, and Miss Alice Buckton.

L. H.

### MR. STURGE MOORE'S "PSYCHE IN HADES"

In the small space available it is impossible to do justice to Mr. Sturge Moore's latest poetic drama, recently given a trial performance in a private, white-walled drawing-room near Petersfield. The subject is a fragment of late myth, of symbolical significance hard to disentangle. On this occasion the poet was director, stage-manager, and costume-designer and painter. Hence the production was remarkable for unity of intention. Masked figures in strangely beautiful robes moved with dignified rhythm and accompanied their delivery of the sonorous, intricate verse with graceful gesture; the cumulative expression of lofty, remote thought and feeling, above mortal ken, held the puzzled audience and forced them to awareness of a pity and terror beyond their comprehension. Looking back at the experience some of the younger onlookers were moved to resentment at having been carried out of their depth; others, realizing that the intellectual comprehension of poetry is not of primary importance, perceived that it should have a niche in memory comparable to that occupied by a first hearing of some great sonata. Mr. Sturge Moore was well served by his cast. The chief players, notably the Psyche, are gifted with fine voices and with the unsparing loyalty and devotion that marks the true artist. One complaint of the players must be mentioned. The masks were stifling. How to design for comfort as well as beauty is a problem the mask-maker must tackle.

### "THE PRINCESS COMES HOME"

"The Princess Comes Home," by Fay Middleton, was presented for the first time on July 26 at the Studio Theatre, Notting Hill Gate. A young, misunderstood wife, in rebellion against her husband's cold, domineering treatment, runs away from home. When son and daughter are grown up, she returns. Her determination to fade away again is strengthened by her daughter's need of her; for the daughter has been seduced, and turned out by the harsh father. The play was well acted, especially by Miss Eve Attersoll as the Princess and Mr. Antony Eustrel as her son.

### BLACKFRIARS THEATRE

We wish to call the attention of our readers to this small theatre, whose excellence may not be generally known by Londoners. It should be found especially suitable by amateur clubs in that it not only enables them to do a three-night show at small cost, but also to spread the average sale of tickets, say 500, over the three nights to their own pleasure and perfection of performance. The theatre is beautifully equipped and is within a stone's throw of Blackfriars Bridge. Full particulars of the conditions of hiring the theatre may be obtained from the Director, Blackfriars Theatre, Lever House, E.C.4.

### ENTERTAINMENTS TAX

To the Editor of DRAMA

Dear Sir,

With reference to Minute 9, last annual meeting, the question of a "private" performance has only an indirect bearing. Entertainment tax is leviable on a payment for admission made by the spectator, and this applies to any performance, public or private. The only point to be considered is this: does the spectator make a payment for admission, direct or indirect?

If, for instance, he previously purchases a programme for a shilling, or if he is admitted on the understanding that he purchases a programme at an unusual price, he has obviously made an indirect payment for admission, and his payment is taxable in the abstract. If spectators are compelled to contribute to a collection, the lump sum may be assessed for tax. If a group of people make a composite payment, for instance, a conference pays £10 for a private show for its members, such payment may be assessed for tax. Subscriptions to societies may be liable if they confer the right of admission to entertainments.

If, however, the spectator is admitted without payment and if his contribution to a collection is entirely optional, that is, if there is no contractual obligation to pay anything at all, it is not the practice of the Commissioners of Customs and Excise to exact tax. Theoretically the spectator has made no payment for admission, direct or indirect; he has simply made a voluntary contribution. In short, the essential condition is a bona fide collection (assuming that no other payment, such as a subscription, has been made).

Some performances, of course, may come within one or other of the regulations relating to exemptions. Here again the question of a "private" performance has little to do with the matter.

Copies of leaflets relating to the tax and a "Charity exemption" can be obtained at the Customs and Excise Office.

Yours faithfully,

ROSS HILLS

### DRAMA LEAGUE LIBRARY

Full Library service has already been recommenced, and on and after Wednesday, October 12, the Library will remain open until 9 p.m. every Wednesday and Thursday evening.

